

# JUVENILE ENTERTAINER.

"Torquet ab obscantis jam nunc sermonibus aurem"

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## THE JUVENILE ENTERTAINER

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## BIOGRAPHY.

### The Progress of Genius.

FROM OBSCURE AND LOW SITUATIONS, TO EMINENCE AND CELEBRITY.

Genius is that gift of God which learning cannot confer, which no disadvantages of birth or education can wholly obscure.

Herman Boerhaave was born 31st Dec 1668. Voorhout, a village near Leyden. At the age of 16 he found himself without parents, protection, advice, or fortune. He was at first designed by his father for the ministry, and with that view instructed in grammar and the languages, in which he made great proficiency. At intervals, to recreate his mind, and strengthen his constitution, he used to go into the fields, and employ himself in rural occupations, and by this dissipation of study and exercise, he, under Providence, preserved himself, in a great measure, from those distempers which are frequently the consequences of uninterrupted application; and from which students, not under the influence of Christian principles, sometimes fly for relief, to intemperance instead of exercise, and purchase temporary ease at the hazard of the most dreadful consequences. After going through his courses at school, he removed to the university, where he made great progress in all the sciences, still regulating his studies with a view to theology, and for that reason he exerted himself to obtain an exact knowledge of the Hebrew tongue. He read the scriptures in their original languages, and when difficulties occurred, consulted the interpretations of the most ancient fathers, whom he read in order of time, beginning with Clements Romanus.

Having exhausted his patrimony in the pursuit of his studies, he was obliged to apply to a profession, that might enable him to support himself, without encroaching all his time and his propensity to the study of physic, growing too violent to be resisted, he at length addicted himself to that employment, without abandoning his views of the ministry.

Upon his application, afterwards, at Leyden,

in order to undertake the ministry, he found unexpected obstacles thrown in his way, in consequence of his being suspected of partiality to the atheistical doctrine of Spinoza, a suspicion entirely without foundation, and which had been hostile and maliciously entertained in consequence of some conversation that had fallen from Boerhaave in a passage bout. Finding this opposition raised against him, he thought it prudent not to struggle with the torrent of popular prejudice, and therefore applied himself to his medical studies with new ardour and alacrity. His time was now wholly taken up in visiting the sick, in study, in teaching the mathematics, and reading the scriptures and those authors who teach the love of God.

His merit being at length discovered, many friends patronized him, and he was chosen to three valuable offices, Professor of Medicine, of Chemistry, and of Botany in the University of Leyden. The Academy of Sciences at Paris, and the Royal Society of London, invited him to become one of their members. All the princes of Europe sent him disciples, who found in Boerhaave, not only an indefatigable teacher, but a tender father, who encouraged them in their labours, consulted them in their afflictions, and solaced them in their wants. When Peter the Great went to Holland in 1715, to instruct himself in maritime affairs, he attended Boerhaave to receive his lessons. His reputation was spread as far as China, a Mandarin wrote to him with this inscription, "To the illustrious Boerhaave, physician in Europe," and the letter came regularly to him.

Boerhaave was favoured not only with uncommon talents, but with a most amiable disposition. He had a decent, simple, and venerable appearance, particularly when age had changed the colour of his hair. It was the daily practice of this eminent person, through his whole life, as soon as he rose in the morning, which was generally very early, to retire for an hour to private prayer, and meditation on some part of the scriptures. He often told his friends, when they asked him how it was possible for him to go through so much fatigue? that it was this which gave him spirit and vigour in the business of the day. This he therefore recommended as the best rule he could give: for nothing, he said, could tend more to the health of the body than the tranquility of the mind: and that he knew nothing which could support himself, or his fellow creatures, amidst the various distresses of life, but a well grounded confidence in God upon Christian principles. This was strongly exemplified in his own illness in 1722, which can hardly be told without horror. He was for five months confined to his bed by the gout, when he lay upon his back without daring to attempt the least motion, because any effort renewed his torments, which were so exquisite, that he was at length not only deprived of motion, but of sense. Here his medical art was at a stand; nothing could be attempted, because nothing could be proposed with the least pros-

pect of success. But having in the sixth month of his illness obtained some remission, he took simple medicines in large quantities, and by the blessing of God, at length wonderfully recovered. The patience of Boerhaave was not founded on vain reasonings, like that of which the Stoics boasted; but on a religious composition of mind, and Christian resignation to the will of God.

In 1726, finding himself much weakened in body, he resigned the professorships of Botany and Chemistry, and on that occasion delivered an oration, in which he asserts the power and wisdom of the Creator from the wonderful fabric of the human body; and confutes all those idle reasoners, who pretend to explain the formation of parts, or the animal operations, to which he proves that art can produce nothing equal, nor any thing parallel. We shall mention one instance, which is produced by him, of the vanity of any attempt to rival the work of God. Nothing is more boasted of by the admirers of Chemistry, than that they can, by artificial heats and digestion, imitate the productions of nature. "Let all these heroes of science meet together, says Boerhaave; let them take bread and wine, the food that forms the blood of man, and by assimilation contributes to the growth of the body; let them try all their arts, they shall not be able from these materials to procure a single drop of blood. So much is the most common act of nature beyond the utmost efforts of the most extended science."

Of his sagacity, and the wonderful penetration with which he often discovered and described, at the first sight of a patient, such distempers as betray themselves by no symptoms to common eyes, such wonderful relations have been spread over the world, as, though attested beyond doubt, can scarcely be credited. We mention none of them, because we have no opportunity of collecting testimonies, or distinguishing between those accounts which are well proved, and those which owe their rise to fiction and credulity. Boerhaave used often to say, that the life of a patient, if trifled with or neglected, would one day be required at the hand of the physician. He always called the poor his best patients, for God, says he, is their paymaster.

The activity of his mind sparkled visibly in his eyes. He was always cheerful, and desirous of promoting every valuable end of conversation; and the excellency of the Christian religion was frequently the subject of it: for he asserted, on all proper occasions, the divine authority and sacred efficacy of the scriptures; and maintained, that they only could give peace of mind, that sweet and sacred peace which passeth all understanding; since none can conceive it but he who has it; and none can have it but by divine communication. He never regarded calumny nor detraction, nor ever thought it necessary to confute them. "They are sparks, said he, which if you do not blow, will go out of themselves." The surest remedy against scandal, is to live it down by a perseverance in well doing;